

## Message Text

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S E C R E T ATHENS 5807

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINT, US, GR

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF ON  
CURRENT TRIAL AND STATE OF THE ARMY

REF: ATHENS 5714

1. I CALLED TODAY (JULY 31) ON MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF ON ANOTHER TOPIC, BUT IN THE COURSE OF PRELIMINARY CONVERSATION, I ASKED HIM HOW HE VIEWED THE TWO MAJOR TRIALS CURRENTLY BEING HELD IN AHTENS (REFTEL), AND WHETHER THERE WAS ANY ANXIETY OR UNREST IN THE ARMY OVER THEM. AVEROFF ADMITTED THAT A FEW DAYS AGO THERE DID EXIST SOME CONCERN THAT A FEW "YOUNGER AND SPIRITED OFFICERS" MIGHT VISIBLY EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS IN ONE NEGATIVE WAY OR THEROTHER OVER THE TRIALS OF SOME FORTY FORMER MILITARY OFFICERS. HOWEVER, THAT PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY IS NOW PAST AND HE ASSERTED THAT EVERYTHING IS NOW "FINE".

2. REGARDING THE TRIAL OF THE TWENTY-ONE OFFICERS CONNECTED WITH THE FEBRUARY 1975 CONSPIRACY, AVEROFF INDICATED THAT HE EXPECTED IT TO BE FINISHED BY THE MIDDLE OF NEXT WEEK. WHILE HE EXPECTS THAT PRISON SENTENCES OF VARYING TERMS WILL PROBABLY BE LEVIED ON MANY--BUT NOT ALL--OF THE DEFENDANTS, HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY PARTICULARLY SEVERE SENTENCES WOULD BE IMPOSED--"A FEW YEARS," HE SAID.

3. WHEN I ASKED HIM ABOUT THE PROBABLE VERDICTS FOR THE  
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APRIL 21, 1967, DEFENDANTS, HE DECLARED THAT HARSH SENTENCES

WOULD MOST LIKELY BE FORTHCOMING. HE SAID HE DID NOT REPEAT NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF DEATH SENTENCES BEING HANDED DOWN FOR ONE OR MORE OF THOSE DEFENDANTS, ALTHOUGH HE INDICATED, IF SO, THEY WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE COMMUTED. HE REMINDED ME THAT THE CHARGES IN THIS CASE WERE "HIGH TREASON" AND THAT THERE IS STRONG FEELING THROUGHOUT ALL OF GREEK SOCIETY AGAINST THE INSTIGATORS OF THE APRIL 1967 COUP. HE THEN TOLD ME THAT THE "DIGNIFIED AND INTELLIGENT" STATEMENT OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER (AND COUP LEADER) PAPADOPOULOS HAS CONSTITUTED A VERY POSITIVE FACTOR IN THE TRIAL'S CONDUCT AND SHOULD RESULT IN A SPEEDIER RESOLUTION THAN WOULD OTHERWISE LIKELY OCCUR.

3. AVEROFF THEN TOLD ME THAT THE UPCOMING TRIAL OF THE "TORTURERS" WOULD BE A DIFFICULT ONE, IN THAT PUBLIC OPINION HAD BEEN ROUSED BY THE ACTIVITIES OF THE DEFENDANTS. SIMILARLY, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE "CYPRUS TRIAL" (NO DATE YET SCHEDULED) WILL BE A DIFFICULT AND SERIOUS ONE (ATHENS 2361). HE EXPLAINED THAT SERIOUS CHARGES AND COUNTER-CHARGES WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE EXCHANGED AMONG MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS AND THAT HE DID NOT EXCLUDE THE LIKELIHOOD THAT ACCUSATIONS WOULD BE MADE AGAINST THE USG, THE CIA, PENTAGON, ETC. HOWEVER, HE WAS QUICK TO NOTE, FORMER STRONG MAN IOANNIDES (THE LIKELY PRIME DEFENDANT) WOULD HAVE TO SUBSTANTIATE ANY SUCH CHARGES AND THAT THIS OF COURSE WOULD NOT BE AN EASY TASK. HE EXPRESSED SPECIAL CONCERN ABOUT THE EFFECT THIS TRIAL WOULD HAVE ON GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS IN THAT INFORMATION WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY COME OUT CONCERNING ALLEGED PLANS BY THE THEN GREEK MILITARY LEADERS TO ATTACK TURKEY.

5. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, AVEROFF EXPRESSED HIS FIRM BELIEF THAT THE SITUATION IN THE ARMY IS STABLE, MORALE IS GOOD, AND IT IS FIRMLY UNDER HIS AND CARAMANLIS' CONTROL. HE MENTIONED THAT HE HAD TAKEN GREAT PAINS TO NURTURE HIS RELATIONS WITH THE ARMY AND HE BELIEVES THAT THEY ARE NOW FULLY AND WILLINGLY RESPONSIVE TO HIM. HE DECLARED THAT THE ARMY'S AIM NOW IS TO PROVE ITSELF A DISCIPLINED AND PROFESSIONAL ARMED SERVICE.

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6. AVEROFF THEN VOLUNTEERED HIS OPINION THAT A COUP IS EXCLUDED IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. AS A FUNDAMENTAL REASON HE REPEATED HIS PRIOR ASSERTION THAT THE ARMY IS UNDER HIS CONTROL AND DEDICATED TO ITS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES, AND THAT THE JUNTA HAS BEEN DISCREDITED. HOWEVER, HE ADDED, THERE ARE TWO OTHER REASONS AS WELL. ONE, HE HAS ORGANIZED FOR HIMSELF A SYSTEM OF INTELLIGENCE GATHERING WHEREBY HE KNOWS WHAT IS HAPPENING THROUGHOUT

THE ARMED FORCES EVEN IN MINUTE DETAIL, AND (2) EVEN SHOULD THAT SYSTEM FAIL, HE CAN "PRESS A BUTTON" (GESTURING TO AN AREA UNDER HIS DESK), AND HE WOULD BE ABLE TO HAVE EVERY MAJOR BUILDING IN ATHENS OCCUPIED BY LOYAL FORCES ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. IN SUMMATION, HE REPEATED HIS CONVICTION THAT THE SITUATION IN THE ARMED SERVICES IS STABLE AND SATISFACTORY.

7. IN CONCLUSION, AVEROFF STATED THAT TO THE DEGREE THAT ANY DANGER EXISTS RELATIVE TO THE ARMED FORCES, IT WOULD STEM MORE FROM THE "PROPAGANDA OF ANDREAS" (PAPANDREOU) THAN FROM "THE PROPAGANDA OF THE JUNTA." HE REPEATED THAT THE JUNTA IS DISCREDITED AND THAT ITS INFLUENCE IS MINIMAL--BUT THAT ANDREAS HOLDS HIMSELF OUT AS A "MODEL" AND THAT HIS STATUS AS A PARLIAMENTARIAN IS RESPECTABLE. IN THAT SENSE, YOUNG ARMY OFFICERS MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO CONSIDER ANDREAS AS AN "ALTERNATIVE" AND THAT AS THE LEADER OF A "NATIONAL SOCIALIST MOVEMENT" HE MIGHT SEEM ATTRACTIVE TO SOME YOUNGER MILITARY OFFICERS""AT LEAST AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE--UNLESS, AS MANY BELIEVE, HE SO MISMANAGES HIMSELF AND HIS MOVEMENT THAT HE DESTROYS BOTH HIMSELF AND IT.

8. COMMENT. IN A CONVERSATION I HAD THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS JUST BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR HELSINKI, HE EXPRESSED VIEWS SIMILAR TO AVEROFF'S ABOUT THE TRIALS NOW TAKING PLACE. BITSIOS THOUGHT THAT THE TRIAL OF PAPADOPOULOS AND THE OTHER 1967 COUP TRIAL DEFENDENTS WOULD BE OVER WITHIN A MONTH AND THAT THE SENTENCES WOULD BE SEVERE. BITSIOS SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THE GREEK ARMED FORCES AND THE  
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PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY EXPECTED AND WERE PREPARED FOR HARSH PUNISHMENT TO BE METED OUT.

9. EVEN SO, BITSIOS GAVE NO INDICATION TO ME THAT HE THOUGHT THE DEATH SENTENCE WAS LIKELY. I UNDERSTAND THAT NO SENTENCE OF DEATH HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN BY A GREEK COURT FOR SEVERAL DECADES AND THAT THE BITTERNESS FROM THE LAST SUCH SENTENCE LASTED FOR MANY, MANY YEARS.  
KUBISCH

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